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Forest Health Protection
Pacific Southwest Region

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Subject: Annosus root disease survey in the Washington Project Area
(FHP Evaluation NE04-08)

To: District Ranger, Nevada City Ranger District, Tahoe National Forest

At the request of Terri Walsh (Silviculturist, Downieville and Nevada City RDs) Forest Health Protection (FHP) surveyed old plantations and individual tree removal units in the Washington Project Area for annosus root disease on April 20, 2004. The objective was to determine if annosus root disease is a problem in past harvest areas where stumps were not treated with a borate compound to prevent the establishment of this disease. Bill Woodruff (FHP Plant Pathologist) and Terri Walsh visited regeneration units which were planted at least ten years ago and individual tree removal units which were thinned at least ten years earlier. Approximately ten units were visited and more were scanned from the road. No mortality from pine-type annosus root disease was discovered during this survey. Ponderosa pine was the main species surveyed except as noted below. As a result of this survey and the absence of reports of annosus root disease in pine from the Tahoe NF, it is not necessary to treat pine stumps with Sporax (the borate compound which prevents annosus spores from germinating and entering stumps) in the proposed Washington Project thinnings.

In addition to reviewing Forest Service land, a harvest unit on private land was briefly examined. The unit is adjacent to a proposed thinning unit in the Washington Project. The purpose was to examine white fir stumps in a recent harvest unit for signs of annosus root disease since no

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evidence of the disease was found in the proposed Washington Project unit. No sign of fir-type annosus root disease was found in the white fir in either stand. This is a good indication that the disease is not present. Since annosus root disease is present in white fir stands elsewhere on the Tahoe NF, it is possible that the disease could become established in the white fir in the Washington Project Area through untreated white fir stumps. It is therefore wise to treat white fir stumps with Sporax in healthy white fir stands to prevent the unnatural establishment of the disease. While it is true that the fir-type annosus root disease can become established in white fir through natural wounds, creating numerous stumps during harvest could accelerate this occurrence. It is also prudent to minimize wounding of residual fir trees during thinning operations to reduce the possibility of annosus infections.

It should be noted that it is wise to treat any conifer stump with Sporax when there is a nearby high value conifer which is affected by the same type of annosus. Fir-type annosus can infect true firs, Douglas-fir and giant sequoias. Pine-type annosus primarily infects pines and incense-cedar. It is Region 5 policy to treat all conifer stumps in recreation areas and administrative sites where all trees are considered to be of "high value". For more information on annosus root disease in Region 5, refer to the Forest Service Handbook which is attached to this report. Data from recent surveys in eastside pine stands suggest no difference in stump infection by *Heterobasidion annosum* of chainsaw felled vs. mechanically harvested trees. Surveys also suggest that the 12-inch stump diameter limit currently in the FSH could be raised to 14 inches (outside bark stump diameter) with little risk of increasing annosus root disease. Based on the data presented in the attached biological evaluation, Forest Health Protection is now recommending that in eastside pine or mixed conifer type forest stands, that freshly cut 14 inch diameter and larger conifer stumps be treated with Sporax® to prevent infection by *Heterobasidion annosum*. Because of the low occurrence of annosus root disease in westside and northcoast areas, treating conifer stumps 14 inches in diameter and larger in westside/northcoast areas would seem to present a low risk of future annosus root disease impact. This does not change current Manual direction "To perpetuate the forest environment in and around developed recreation sites, treat all freshly cut coniferous tree stumps to prevent introduction and spread of *Heterobasidion annosum*".

If you need further assistance, please do not hesitate to call Bill Woodruff at 252-6680.

/s/ Bill Woodruff

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CHAPTER 60 - MANAGEMENT OF SPECIFIC PESTS

62 - DISEASES.

62.2 - Other Diseases.

1. Introduction to Annosus Root Disease. This section describes annosus root disease in the Pacific Southwest Region, and discusses the biology and resource management implications of the disease. It also presents guidelines and techniques for its detection, and management strategies available for reducing its impact.

Annosus root disease is one of the most important conifer diseases in the Region. Current estimates are that the disease infests about 2 million acres of commercial forest land in California, resulting in an annual volume loss of 19 million cubic feet. Potential impacts of the disease include: increased susceptibility of infected trees to attack by bark beetles, mortality of infected trees presently on the site, the loss of production on the site, and, in recreation areas, depletion of vegetative cover and increased probability of tree failure and hazard. In recreation areas, annosus-infected trees are often extremely hazardous, causing death or injury to visitors, and damage to permanent installations and property.

The goal of annosus root disease management in the Region is to reduce resource losses to levels which are economically, aesthetically, and environmentally acceptable when measured against the objectives of the resource manager. It is possible to reduce the impact of annosus root disease through detection, evaluation, prevention, and suppression. These activities must progress in a planned, timely sequence for successful reduction of annosus root disease impacts. Detection and evaluation in individual stands are normally necessary before undertaking prevention and suppression action. In developed recreation sites, early recognition and removal of hazardous annosus-infected trees is critical, and will greatly improve chances of preventing future damage with minimal site deterioration. Prevention is the most desirable means of reducing losses. Undertake suppression activities only when needed to supplement prevention measures. The basic guidelines for detection (FSM 3410), evaluation (FSM 3420), prevention (FSM 3406.1) and suppression (3406.2) for any insect or disease also pertain to annosus root disease. However, consider the additional specific guidelines for annosus root disease summarized in this section.

Annosus root disease occurs on a wide range of woody plants. The disease affects all western conifers; hardwoods are generally resistant or immune. All the National Forests in Region 5 have reported finding it. Incidence is particularly high on Jeffrey pine in southern California recreation sites and on Jeffrey and ponderosa pine in eastside pine type forests. The disease, endemic in the Red and White Fir forest types, is associated with one-fifth or more of the true fir mortality in the forests surveyed in northern California.

2. Biology.

a. Heterobasidion annosum (Fomes annosus) causes annosus root disease. The fungus is similar to the common heartrot fungi, and forms fruiting bodies or conks in decayed stumps, under the bark of dead trees, or, rarely, under the duff at the root collar.

Infection centers start when airborne spores produced by the conks land and grow on freshly cut stump surfaces. Infection in true fir may also occur through fire and mechanical wounds on the butt. Fresh basal wounds on species other than true fir are rarely colonized. The fungus grows down the stump into the roots and then spreads through root contacts into the root systems of adjacent live trees, resulting in the formation of enlarging disease centers. These infection centers may continue to enlarge until they reach barriers, such as openings in the stand or groups of resistant plants. In pines, the fungus grows through root cambial tissue to the root crown where it girdles and kills the tree. In true fir and other non-resinous species, the fungus sometimes kills trees, but is more frequently confined to the heartwood and inner sapwood of the larger roots. It then eventually extends into the heartwood of the lower trunk and causes chronic decay and growth loss, or failure at the roots. References that discuss the biology and disease cycle of H. annosum include Otrosina and Cobb 1989, and Smith 1993.

Heterobasidion annosum in western North America consists of two intersterility groups, or biological species, the 'S' group and the 'P' group. These two biological species of H. annosum have distinct differences in host specificity. To date, all isolates of H. annosum from naturally infected ponderosa pine, Jeffrey pine, sugar pine, Coulter pine, incense-cedar, western juniper, Pinyon, and manzanita are of the 'P' group. Isolates from true fir and giant sequoia are of the 'S' group. The biological species infecting other hosts are unknown at this time.

This host specificity is not apparent in isolates occupying stumps, with both the 'S' and 'P' groups recovered from pine stumps, and the 'S' group and occasionally the 'P' group from true fir stumps. These data suggest that infection of host trees is specific, but saprophytic colonization of stumps is not. The fungus may survive in infected roots or stumps for many years. Young conifers of a species that is susceptible to the particular intersterility group established near these stumps often die shortly after their roots contact infected roots in the soil.

Invasion of freshly cut stump surfaces by germinating spores is a critical stage in the disease cycle. Conks produce spores which disseminate throughout the year, but H. annosum is dependent on favorable environmental conditions for successful germination and establishment. Spores are inactivated by ambient temperatures of 113º F (45ºC) and mycelium in wood is killed after exposure for one hour at 104º F (40ºC). Temperatures just below the stump surface commonly reach or exceed the thermal inactivation level (40º C) of mycelium from April to September in the Southeastern United States. In eastside pine on the Lassen National Forest, lethal temperatures reach above 40ºC in the top 6 inches of 6-inch diameter stumps when exposed to direct sunlight for several days in the average summer. Temperatures do not approach the lethal range in larger size classes of stumps.

Stumps are susceptible to infection immediately after cutting. Ponderosa pine, Douglas-fir, and coast redwood stumps remain susceptible to infection for 2 to 4 weeks. The decrease in

susceptibility with time is probably a result of colonization of the stumps by microorganisms that compete with and replace H. annosum. Surface area infection of freshly cut ponderosa pine stumps increases with increased photochemical oxidant injury.

Vertical penetration depends on temperature and extent of injury from other sources. After germination, vertical penetration into pine stumps averages 3 inches/month from October through May and 5 to 6 inches/month from June to October. The rate of vertical penetration in stumps from pine trees severely injured by photochemical oxidants is greater than in those from slightly injured or uninjured trees.

Heterobasidion annosum is an important agent predisposing conifers to bark beetle attack. In pines, the fungus weakens trees and increases their susceptibility to pine bark beetles. Infected true firs are predisposed to attack by the fir engraver. White fir mortality from the annosus root disease-fir engraver complex frequently occurs after tree growth decreases because trees are stressed. As a result of the stress, it is suspected that roots grow very slowly and decay faster than the tree can replace them. This predisposes the tree to fir engraver attack, and causes its death.

3. Detection. The general distribution of annosus root disease in the Pacific Southwest Region is known, but information on its location in specific stands may be needed. Based on Region-wide surveys, it is prudent to assume that the pathogen is present in all true fir stands, unless a detailed survey suggests that it is not. Collect location information for stands when planning management activities. Because trees affected by annosus root disease are easily windthrown or fall without visible symptoms that might warn forest recreation managers of impeding failure, the number, size, and locations of annosus infection centers within developed sites or sites planned for development should be determined. Field surveillance and detection surveys will locate occurrences of H. annosum.

4. Field Surveillance. Forest workers and managers, in connection with their regular duties, carry out day-to-day field surveillance (FSM 3411). Stand examinations, inventories and other activities afford excellent opportunities for forest workers to note and record the presence of H. annosum.

A systematic search for diagnostic symptoms of infection and signs of the pathogen, determines the presence of H annosum. Use the following similar symptoms for correct diagnosis:

a. Pattern of Dying Within the Stand. Root pathogens tend to kill trees over a period of years, with oldest deaths at the center, usually around stumps, and recently dead and dying trees at the margin. In contrast, a characteristic of mortality by bark beetles alone is groups of trees dying at about the same time.

b. Pattern of Dying of Individual Trees. Trees with root disease die gradually, with symptoms progressing from the bottom of the crown upwards, and from the inside of the crown out. Infection of the roots causes: (1) reduced height growth, with crowns becoming rounded; (2) thin and chlorotic crowns, resulting from poor needle retention; and (3) subsequent insect attack of the stressed trees.

c. Symptoms and Signs in Roots and Root Crowns. Use symptoms and signs in roots and root crowns to determine the specific identity of the pathogen. The best evidence of H. annosum is the

presence of characteristic fruiting bodies or conks. The annual to perennial, leathery conks vary in size and shape from small button-shaped or "popcorn" conks on the root surface of recently killed seedlings or saplings, to large bracket-type conks. The large conks generally have a light brown to gray upper surface, and a creamy white lower surface with regularly spaced, small pores. Small "popcorn" conks appear as small buff-colored pustules that range in size from a pinhead to a dime. They often have no pore layer. In pines, the conks are found between the bark and wood on stumps, beneath the duff layer at the root crown, and within old stumps. In true fir, the conks are found in cavities hollowed out by the fungus. Conks may be abundant in some stands and scarce or absent in others. Even when present, they can be easily overlooked because of their inconspicuous color and obscure location. Refer to Hadfield, et al. 1986 and Smith 1993 for color photographs of conks.

On pines, additional symptoms may be found by exposing the roots and root crown and examining the inner bark. Choose recently killed or dying trees for examination. Indications of H. annosum infection are: (1) easy separation of the bark from the wood; (2) the separated surfaces are a light brown to buff color, the surface of the wood streaked with darker brown lines; and (3) numerous small silver to white flecks on the surface of the inner bark. Resin often heavily infiltrates infected roots.

Incipient or early stages of wood decay are not very diagnostic. Discoloration may or may not be present and the heartwood remains firm and hard. As the decay progresses, the wood becomes white to straw yellow, separates along annual rings, and may contain elongated white pockets.

If field personnel are unable to identify H. annosum with certainty, or desire confirmation of a tentative identification, the Forest Pest Management Group can assist. Gather specimens of infected root tissue in various stages of decay and any fruiting bodies and send them to FPM pathologists in the Service Areas, or to pathologists in the Regional Office. The specimens must be of tissues in early stages of decay to enable isolation of the pathogen. A completed Forest Pest Detection Report (Form R5-3400-1) shall accompany the samples.

5. Detection Surveys. Personnel may conduct detection surveys (FSM 3412) in areas where no other surveys are scheduled and it is essential that the presence or absence of annosus root disease be known for management purposes. The objective of a detection survey is simply to determine the presence and location of H. annosum.

Because annosus root disease is not always obvious and can be difficult to detect, contact the Forest Pest Management Group with a request to conduct the survey if H. annosum has the potential to adversely affect activities or interfere with resource objectives.

6. Evaluation. The purpose of a biological evaluation (FSM 3421) is to provide information for the resource manager on annosus root disease infestations, their affects on the stand, the management alternatives appropriate in the context of the particular resource management objectives, and the future affects of each alternative. The Forest Pest Management Group or field personnel shall conduct biological evaluations of annosus root disease. Submit requests for a biological evaluation by sending a Forest Pest Detection Report (Form R5-3400-1) or written request to the Regional Forester or FPM Program Leader, or to one of the Service Areas. Field units shall coordinate requests through the appropriate line officer.

7. Management Strategies. Use the integrated pest management (IPM) approach to manage annosus root disease and other pests. IPM involves regulating the pest, the host, and the environment to minimize pest impacts on resource management objectives in ecologically and economically sound ways. Also, use the IPM approach to implement and coordinate activities needed to prevent or suppress pest-related problems. This approach also emphasizes the selection, integration, and use of a variety of tactics on the basis of anticipated economic and ecological consequences. Accomplish control of annosus root disease by prevention of new disease centers, thereby decreasing the risk of stump and wound infection, and through silvicultural manipulation of infested stands to minimize the impact of the disease.

8. Prevention. Prevention (FSM 3406.1) includes activities designed to minimize the impact of a pest before it appears. The objective of annosus root disease prevention is to prevent establishment of the disease in stands. Once annosus root disease becomes established in most forest stands, no economically feasible procedure for directly suppressing the disease is available. Therefore, prevention is the most efficient and economical method of reducing the impact of H. annosum. Prevention of annosus root disease includes treatment of freshly-cut conifer stumps with registered products. Other preventive treatments include carrying out silvicultural activities to lessen stand susceptibility to the disease, and minimizing logging damage and mechanical injuries.

9. Stump Treatment. Personnel can reduce the probability of infection of freshly cut conifer stumps by the use of a surface stump treatment with registered products. Contact Forest Pest Management for currently registered and effective materials. Treatment of freshly cut conifer stumps with two borate products (sodium tetraborate decahydrate and sodium octaborate tetrahydrate) indicate at least 90% efficacy in preventing infection. The borate in the formulations is toxic to the spores of the fungus and prevents germination; it does not have an effect on existing infections. Apply the products according to label directions. For maximum effectiveness, it is imperative to apply the material as soon after felling as practical and that the application cover the entire stump surface and other areas where the bark has been knocked off. The requirement for application in timber sales and other non-force account work shall be part of the contract or cooperative agreement. A Regional C provision is available for inclusion in timber sale contracts.

R-5 FSM 2303 requires treatment of all conifer stumps in recreation sites. The same direction shall apply to other high value areas, such as progeny test sites, seed orchards, and areas of high value trees, such as giant sequoia groves. In eastside pine or mixed conifer type stands, where surveys have indicated high levels of annosus root disease, treatment of conifer stumps 12 inches or greater in diameter is highly recommended during chainsaw felling. When mechanical shearers are used, the minimum diameter should be reduced to 8 inches. These areas include the eastside pine and eastside mixed conifer types on the Modoc, Lassen, Plumas, Tahoe, Sequoia and Inyo National Forests; the Goosenest Ranger District, Klamath National Forest; and the McCloud Ranger District, Shasta-Trinity National Forests.

In all other areas, consider stump treatments on an individual stand basis. The line officer is responsible for the decision to treat freshly cut conifer stumps, and shall base that decision on information available for the specific situation in the particular stand in question. This information should include:

a. The objectives and management direction for the stand.

b. The level of annosus root disease currently in the stand or in nearby similar stands, determined by an examination of stumps for evidence of H. annosum and indications of infection in living trees.

c. An estimate of the cost-effectiveness of the treatment.

d. A Forest Pest Management biological evaluation or an on-site visit.

10. Avoiding Cambial Damage. In addition to being an aggressive colonizer of freshly-cut stumps, H. annosum can also act as a wound parasite by attacking living trees through injuries that expose cambial tissue. The fungus, as well as other decay fungi, are likely to colonize logging injuries, especially those in contact with the ground. Trees with nonresinous wood, such as true fir and hemlock, are more likely to be infected following injury and to have more extensive decay than species with resinous wood, such as Douglas-fir and the pines. Decay caused by H. annosum is common behind fire scars and other basal wounds in true fir. It may be possible to minimize losses by preventing fires that expose cambium when underburning for fuels reduction, and by reducing mechanical injuries during stand entries.

Other methods of prevention have been suggested, but consider these methods experimental until there is demonstrated efficacy under California conditions. These experimental methods include: (1) thinning during the hotter summer months; (2) creation of high stumps, and, (3) control of stocking density in true fir stands.

11. Suppression. Suppression (FSM 3406.2) of annosus root disease includes the reduction of damage to acceptable or tolerable levels. Direct suppression procedures for H. annosum, such as stump removal, creation of buffer strips, and soil fumigation, are costly and considered experimental. Indirect suppression options, that is, those that alter conditions favoring the pest through the application of silvicultural methods of stand manipulation, are available. These methods include species conversion, thinning in true fir stands, and in recreation areas, thinning and interplanting with hardwoods.

a. Species Conversion. Because of host specificity of the 'S' and 'P' types of H. annosum, favor the non-infected host species (see item 2.a.). In mixed conifer stands with infected true firs, the stand my be converted to pines and incense-cedar with little risk of subsequent infection. If pines are infected, favor true fir. In recreation areas, favor existing hardwoods or the non-infected conifer species. Since hardwoods are resistant, the fungus will eventually die out over a period of 2 to 4 decades, depending on stump size. Then, take steps to regenerate the conifers.

b. Thinning in True Fir Stands. Field observations suggest that removal of slow growing fir and thinning of overstocked stands to increase tree vigor may reduce the impact of the disease, given that the residual trees are capable of responding to release.

c. Revegetate Disease Centers. If consistent with site-specific objectives, resistant species can be used to revegetate active annosus centers. Leaving the centers barren or revegetating with hardwoods will allow the fungus to eventually die out over a period of several decades or more. Favoring hardwoods already present and planting suitable hardwoods provides a barrier of nonsusceptible roots that may limit the spread of infection centers. Thin dense pole-sized stands of susceptible conifers and interplant with hardwoods. Doing this minimizes opportunities for root

contact and reduces the risk of further spread. It also increases tree vigor, which reduces risk of bark beetle attack.

d. Stump Removal. Removal of stumps and roots infected with H. annosum would reduce the amount of inoculum of the fungus on the site, and allow for earlier successful revegetation of the site with susceptible conifers. Stump removal as a suppressive method is being tested in several recreation sites, and its efficacy has not yet been demonstrated.

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